

The New Jersey Shore...

OCEAN BYPASS

Inland Waterway from Manasquan Inlet to Cape May Provides 116 Miles of Boating Fun While Offering Protection from Sea

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM



Cruising along a section of New Jersey's "little ditch" which provides sheltered waters for weekend sailors and Florida-bound skippers. Wake is that of the Navigator, a 36-foot cabin cruiser owned and used by state's Department of Conservation to patrol Waterway.

TRAVELING the Inland Waterway from Manasquan Inlet to Cape May forces a man to recognize that there is far more to the New Jersey Shore than is heralded beachfront glamor. This can be at times a bit disillusioning, however—something like discovering that your prom date is wearing loafers rather than silver slippers.

The Waterway, after all, touches the back yards—the fishing piers, the marshy islands, the rough fishing shacks out on the sedges. It is a place for those who like the feel of a boat under their feet or a sail over their heads. It is a place teeming with potential excitement—more excitement for many than that offered by the party-dressed boardwalk.

New Jersey's 116 miles of Inland Waterway is but a small part of the ocean bypass leading all the way south to Florida (or, in season, all the way north to New Jersey). The section between Manasquan Inlet and Cape May in its twisting and turnings and its

shallowness is by no means the best stretch of the Waterway—but, like most byways, it offers fascinations not found where speed is possible. And, to the yachtsman, it offers protection from the wildness of the ocean.

THE Inland Waterway has a formal name—the Intracoastal Waterway—but rare is the person who gets that formal. Many a veteran traveler calls the New Jersey section "The Ditch," or worse; a boating expert called it "a muddy nightmare" in an article in Sports Illustrated Magazine. He highlighted the slim depth of the Waterway—often less than five feet.

That's the worst of it. Veteran travelers can be wrong—particularly those who view life merely as getting from one place to another as quickly as possible. For thousands of persons in no hurry the Inland Waterway is a delight.

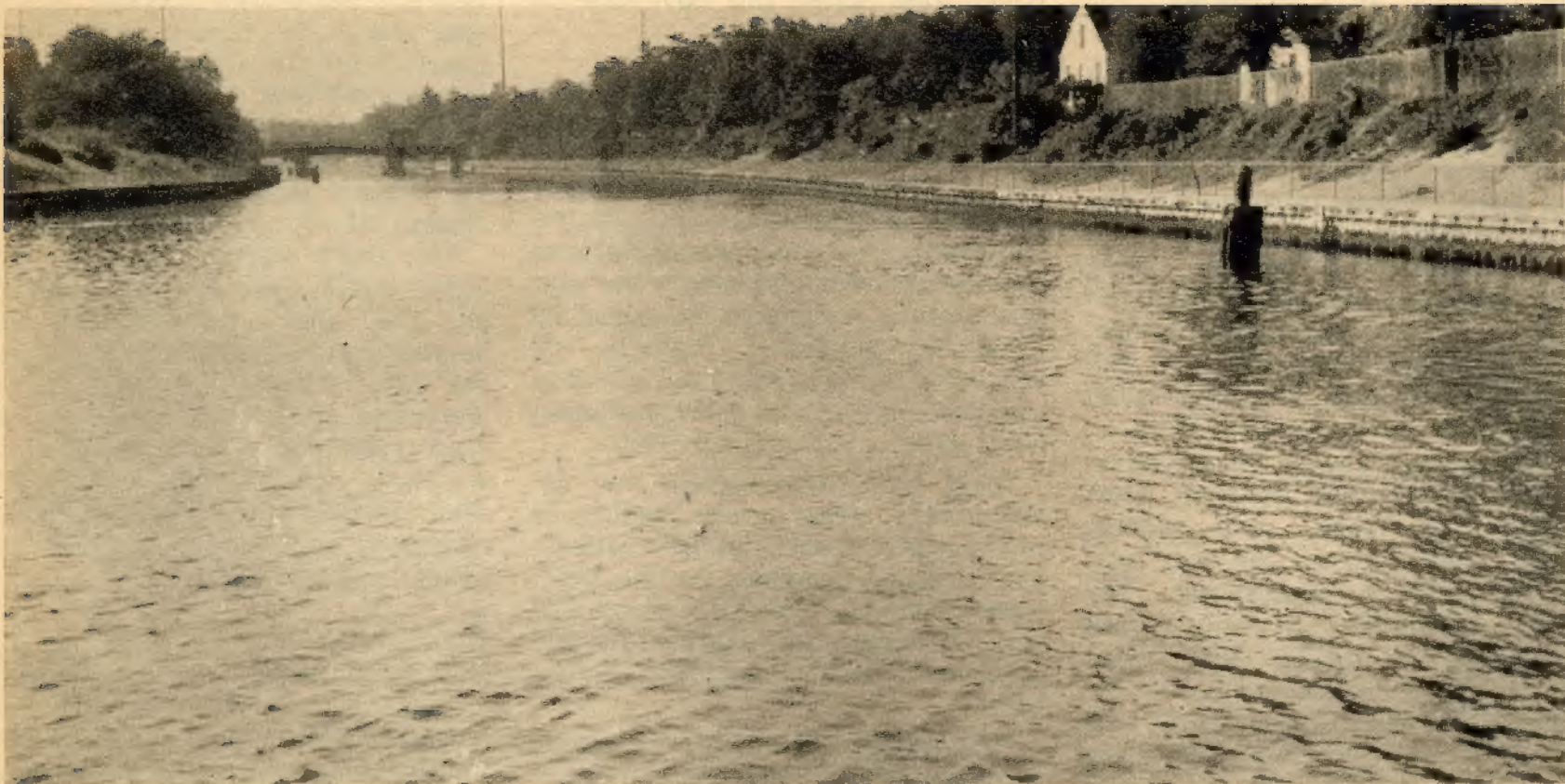
Certainly the Ditch must be known to be appreciated. There are several ways to know it vicariously—with books such as Fessenden Blanchard's

This is the 15th of a series of articles on the New Jersey Shore. Commercial fishing, an economic mainstay, will be considered in next Sunday's installment.



Transit III, workboat of Inland Waterway crew. The 70-foot craft, built in 1951, carries everything needed for channel maintenance. **RIGHT:** Corps of Engineers boat checking channel off Beach Haven. Army Engineers and Coast Guard share Waterway's duties with state.





cruising guides or the delightfully informal "We Took to Cruising" by Talbot and Jessica Hamlin. Armchair trips are also possible via an imagination and the cruising guides put out by the gasoline companies or the official charts issued by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey.

DREAM travel always leaves much to be desired. Nary a book or a chart will coax the gulls to sweep in to grab a bit of food tossed in the air. Nor can an armchair view encompass snowy egrets standing in the marshes or tell the drama of a thunder and lightning storm flashing in the west. Neither can vicarious travel truly show the comradeship to be found on the open waters of the Waterway.

The best way, then, is to course the Waterway by boat—yours, a friend's, or, if you're a lucky newspaperman, aboard the Navigator. The 'Gator is a trim 46-foot cabin cruiser owned by the State Department of Conservation and Economic Development and used to patrol that part of the Inland Waterway within New Jersey.

Riding the Navigator is a joy under any circumstances; she's a good ship—complete with galley, four bunks and some of the comforts of home (in case any very important people

such as legislators want to inspect the Waterway). The 'Gator is big and roomy and her twin engines make her move.

Still, it takes a skipper to make a boat come alive. Aboard the state's boat, that skipper is Capt. Raymond Huber.

QUIET but friendly, in the distinctive manner of most veterans of the New Jersey Shore, Ray Huber has lived on or near the Waterway all his life. He has worked on the Inland Waterway since 1927, when he shipped on at the age of 19. He has held every type of job on the Ditch; perhaps no one knows this inland sea road better or loves it more than Capt. Ray Huber.

Everybody on the Waterway knows the captain—the bridge tenders, the yachtsmen, the clammers, the skippers who gather on the porches of the yacht clubs. Most hail him simply, "Hi, U-Boat." Capt. Huber explains with a grin:

"That's a hangover from when I was a kid on the Atlantic City docks. We were all excited over the German submarines off the coast, so I never minded when the boys changed 'Huber' to 'U-Boat'."

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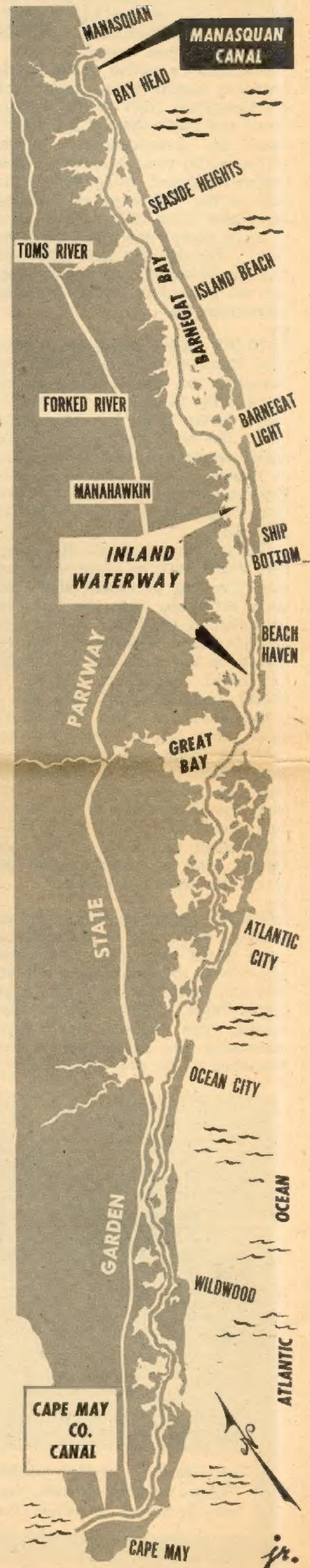
Scene along canal which serves to link Manasquan River with Barnegat Bay.



Capt. Ray Huber, pilot of the Navigator, and a familiar figure on the route.



Atlantic City's "back yard" presents fishing village appearance to voyagers of Inland Waterway.



OCEAN BYPASS

(Continued From Preceding Page)

New Jersey's section of the Inland Waterway begins where boats duck into Manasquan Inlet off the Atlantic Ocean and that's where Capt. Huber takes his newspaperman turned yachtsman-for-a-couple-of-days. Fessenden Blanchard, recognized as the guide to the waterways, calls Manasquan Inlet "first class, easy to enter or leave except during an off-shore blow." Through this inlet each year pass thousands of boats whose skippers are pleased to be safe from the treacherous sea.

UNLIKE yachts bound south from New England and New York, the Navigator this day will not be exposed to the 24 miles of open sea between Sandy Hook and Manasquan Inlet. The real "missing link" in the inland passageway from New England to Florida is that section of solid Monmouth County between the Navesink or Shrewsbury rivers and Manasquan River.

Given a "dream canal" here, skippers would have no cause to go outside (granting, of course, that their boats drew less than the five feet limitation of the lower end of New Jersey's Inland Waterway). The trip outside on the ocean can be a highly unpleasant experience during a fussing and fuming off-shore gale.

That dream of a Red Bank-Manasquan canal revives every now and then, but dreamers don't reckon with costs. Back in 1911 State Geologist Henry B. Kummel reported a canal from the Shrewsbury to the Manasquan would cost about \$2,500,000—but warned that some of the land "might soon be worth \$1,000 per acre." He urged quick action.

DURING the Korean War, canal enthusiasts said a Red Bank-Manasquan canal would have great commercial possibilities and would serve military necessity because of the Naval Ammunition Depot at Earle and Ft. Monmouth. The "missing link" didn't materialize then either; there is little likelihood it ever will. Mr. Kummel's

1911 estimate of a \$2,500,000 cost would be peanuts today.

When Capt. Huber spins the Navigator around in the Atlantic waves and heads her back between Manasquan's stone jetties, riders get the same sense of being introduced to the Inland Waterway that thousands of small boatmen experience every year. Past the jetties, through the draw of the upraised railroad bridge, under the Brielle highway span and southward through the Manasquan Canal to Bay Head goes the 'Gator.

Capt. Huber keeps the powerful engines of his craft throttled down through the canal, and, indeed, doesn't open up until the boat slips past the draw at Mantoloking. The surging wake of the ship at full speed makes it evident why skilled pilots throttle down in narrow or heavily-populated areas; waves rippling off to shore from the wake would be enough to smash a boat tied up at dockside.

BELOW Mantoloking the full glory of Barnegat Bay stretches before the viewer. A stimulating spot, this bay can be treacherous for the unwary. Charts show why. Often shoals give less than a foot of water on either side of the channel. A first trip is no time for speed.

A first trip is a time to study the channel markers. Boatmen should know them well (although there is ample evidence that many of the new breed of skippers are less interested in safety than horsepower). Channel markers serve exactly the same purpose as highway signs; on the Waterway boats keep to the right as on highways. The markers—combined with common courtesy—make the Inland Waterway as safe as a back yard.

Capt. Huber shares the worries about the Inland Waterway (and all New Jersey's tidal waters) that are common among thoughtful boatmen and the state officials charged with keeping the waters safe. "There are just too many boats," says this Waterway veteran. "Thirty years ago there were few boats. Now everybody is his own captain. Why, I think you

could walk across this bay—boat to boat—on a Sunday."

THE boating fever continues to pick up pace, quickened by the growing popularity of man-made lagoons leading off Barnegat Bay. Between 1950 and 1955, 30 additional miles of waterfront were created along such lagoons in coast counties and within the next five years an estimated additional 60 miles are projected. Figuring 100 waterfront lots per mile, and a boat to every lot, that will be 9,000 additional boats which didn't exist in 1950.

Right now those lagoons and developments along rivers leading to the bay have caused terrific marking and dredging problems for the state. Every channel must be designated with triangles (to starboard) and squares (to port) to guide the sailors home.

Fortunately New Jersey no longer is responsible for dredging and marking the main stem of the Waterway. The federal government took over that responsibility in 1953; now the Coast Guard does the marking and the Army Engineers the dredging. Both of these had been state responsibilities since the major part of the Waterway was opened to traffic in 1915.

Relinquishing control of the Intracoastal Waterway has permitted the state to spend more time on the tributary channels—and that is a big job, a job too long delayed. In addition to dredging, the channels must be marked. Flashing beacons must be put at entrances, more than 200 barrel buoys are in the channels and 3,800 channel stakes (each bearing a triangle or square marker) must be maintained.

THERE are many tributaries worth exploring off Barnegat Bay—Metedeconk River, Toms River, Forked River, Oyster Creek and so on. One especially appealing is Forked River, where both a State Marina (berthing spot) and the headquarters of the channel marking and maintenance crew are located.

New Jersey's first marina was built at Forked River in the early 1930s and

now has 102 berths available. On the east end of the marina is the headquarters for the crews charged with maintaining New Jersey's part of the Inland Waterway. Often the Navigator is tied up here, particularly when the state's unique work boat—the Transit III—is out in the channels.

The third craft in line of work boats would win no beauty contest but she does an important job. Seventy feet long with a 20-foot beam, the latest Transit has been on the Waterway since 1951. Her shallow draft (four feet) permits her to move anywhere and her bulky shape has been designed to carry everything her eight-man crew needs to mark and maintain the channels.

FORKED RIVER is diverting, but nothing on the Inland Waterway quite matches the atmosphere on and about Barnegat Bay. Boats move by constantly, almost without variance showing the greatest courtesy both for one another or for tiny rowboats anchored beside the channel. Town after town lies low on the horizon to seaward; westward, green woods edge down to the bay, the treetops broken only by villages huddled beneath church steeples.

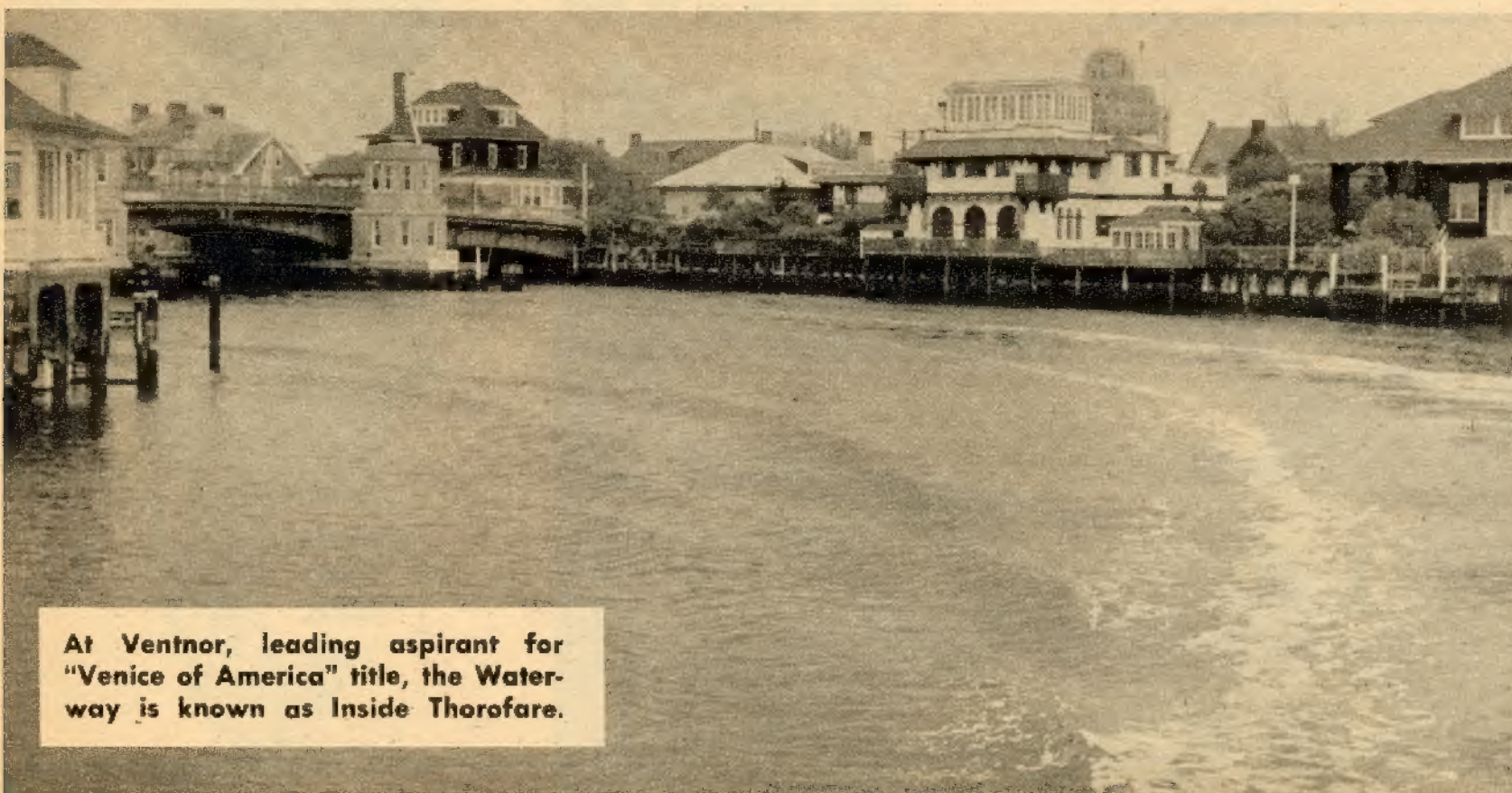
Barnegat Light dominates a broad area of the bay. The red and white shaft is as much a beacon for Inland Waterway tourists as it has been for ocean-going vessels for a century. As the light falls behind to the northeast, the Navigator slips under the new high level bridge under construction at Manahawkin, moves beyond the end of Long Beach Island and into the choppy waters of Little Egg Inlet.

This inlet can be rough, since it is not really an inlet at all but rather a broad open stretch between Long Beach Island and the nearly-deserted islands of Great Bay. The Atlantic Ocean sweeps through the inlet in power, forcing the Waterway Channel to hug the blunt peninsula on which Little Egg Coast Guard station stands.

CCROSSING Little Egg Inlet signals a new facet of the Waterway, something to be encountered all the way south to Cape May. Now on all sides are seen the vast numbers of low-lying sedge islands through which the Inland Waterway twists and turns like a constantly coiling and uncoiling snake.

Spread over these flatlands 10 miles northwest of Atlantic City is the Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge—16,000 acres of freshwater ponds and tidal marshes set aside to protect the natural life threatened by development everywhere on the New Jersey shore. The wildness of the refuge is in startling contrast with the towers of Atlantic City, shadowy in the distance.

Atlantic City is a good first night tie-up for anyone who has been poking in and around the waterway, bent on exploration rather than speed. The Atlantic City seen by the water traveler is sharply different from Boardwalk views familiarly associated with the famed city of amusement.



At Ventnor, leading aspirant for "Venice of America" title, the Waterway is known as Inside Thorofare.



Entrance to Forked River from Barnegat Bay on way to state marina. Note "slow speed" sign. At nearby State Navigation Bureau headquarters, workers (below) prepare one of channel marker poles for replacement along Inland Waterway.



MANY boatmen tie up at the Atlantic City Marina (which will have berths for approximately 350 boats when finished). Other yachtsmen tie up at private docks along lagoons leading into the back "yard" of Atlantic City. Here there is no tinsel or gaudiness; here truly is a queen in comfortable old clothes. The waterfront looks more like a New England fishing village than the supposedly sophisticated city of gaiety.

Yachtsmen who know their navigation find their way to the Tuna Club, which claims the largest boat club membership in the world. The clubhouse has handsome appointments, but skippers love best its broad porch overlooking the lagoon. There they relive their days on the decks—decades for many of them.

At the Tuna Club—or at any of the 20 to 25 yacht clubs along the shore where yachtsmen tie up—tales of giant catches are swapped. These fish never get away, and most of them are larger than any in the sea. One skipper in describing a huge haul might

begin: "You remember that white whale? That Moby Dick? Well..."

Next morning, at an hour whose earliness depends on how much larger than "that white whale" the fish eventually become on the Tuna Club porch, skippers slip out of the Atlantic City harbor and idle down-stream again. They try to reach the railroad bridge between 20 minutes and 30 minutes after any hour, because those are the only minutes when the bridge will open.

THE state boat captain tells a beginner that 23 of the 29 bridges between Bay Head and Cape May are tended—and the beginner can judge for himself that bridge tenders are not chosen for fleetness of foot. Still, the job gets done. Out on the Waterway few chafe about such things as slowly-opening draws—nor should they. If the beginner happens to have been one of the thousands of motorists caught by an open drawbridge while a single yacht goes through on an

August Sunday, he is not unduly sympathetic.

Just south of Atlantic City is Ventnor, whose back "yard" must be judged the most appealing on the New Jersey Shore. Good looking houses overlook the Waterway (called Inside Thorofare at this point) and trees rise behind the bulkheads. Many New Jersey Shore areas claim to be the real "Venice of America." Ventnor comes closest in appearance, at least.

On and on the Navigator moves, down past Ocean City, past Strathmere and Sea Isle City and Townsend's Inlet, across Great Sound and through Great Channel and Dung Thorofare to Grassy Sound and Richardson Sound.

EVERYTHING is personal down in this Cape May back yard meadowland. Names of islands and thoroughfares and sounds are those of long-gone discoverers or storytellers. Interestingly enough, down here bays are called "sounds" all the way from Ocean City to Cape May (excepting only Ludlam Bay). This is different country—birds of all kinds, including the beautiful egret, fly or stalk over the flats where wild rice billows in the soft breeze.

The twists and turns through Cape May's islands make it clear why yachtsmen call this waterway a "road." The wake of the boat is clear far to the rear as it curves gracefully around and between the sedges. At one particularly twisting point Capt. Huber looks back at the wake and remarks:

"We call this 'Snake Alley'. You'll find it on the charts as 'Crook Horn'."

WILDWOOD'S Otten Harbor is a must for an exploring visitor, although a cruising yachtsman usually passes it by: northbound, he has just left Cape May; southbound, he is too close to Cape May to stop. If curious, however, he'll at least have a look at Otten's Harbor—and if he's lucky enough to arrive when a kicking ocean wind keeps
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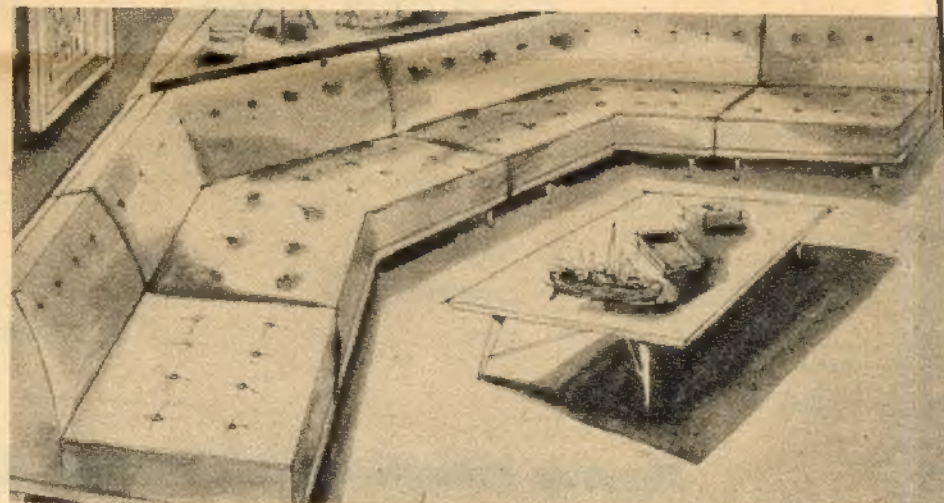
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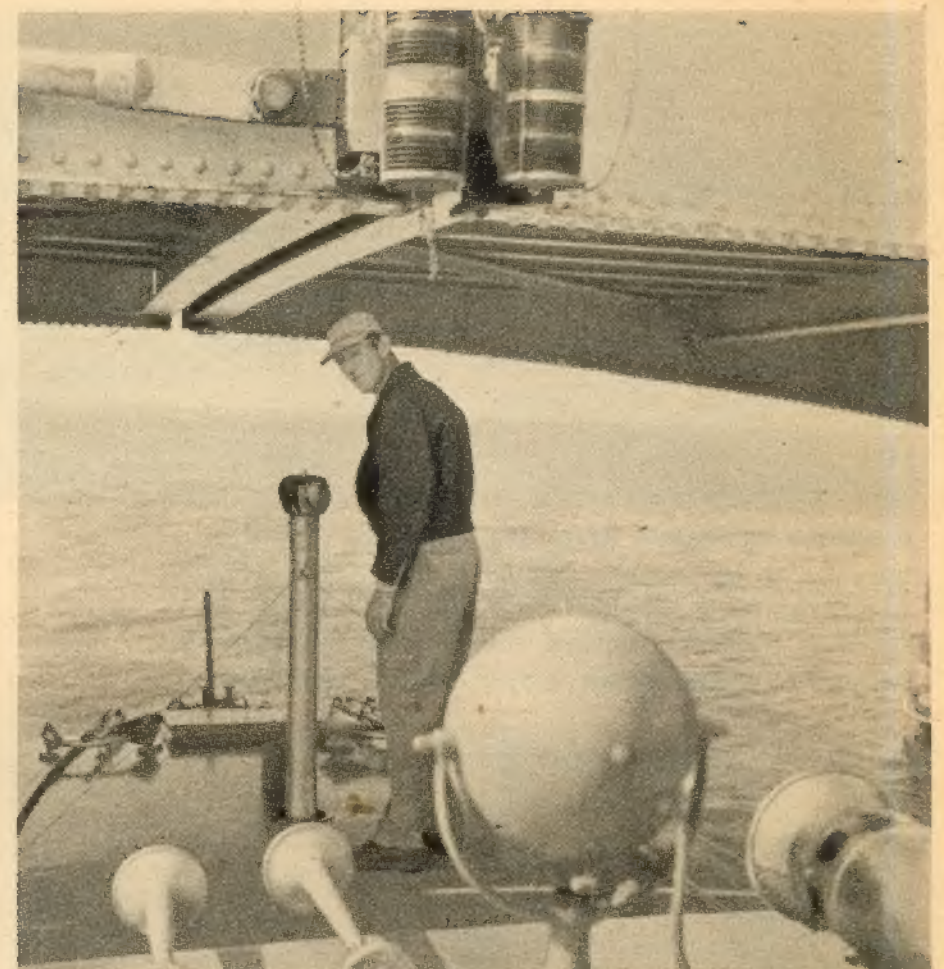
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Walter Stiles, 'Gator mate, stands on bow to guide boat under bridge with low clearance.

OCEAN BYPASS

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)
boats to harbor, he'll see Otten's alive with the big commercial fishing fleet berthed there.

The Navigator slips in and out of Otten's Harbor, glides through Jarvis Sound and soon is inside Cape May's splendid big harbor, unquestionably one of the best small boat anchorages on the Atlantic coast.

Boats of all sizes swarm through the harbor, many of the larger craft being based at the Coast Guard training station at the head of the harbor. Fishing vessels tie up here or stop by for fuel and supplies; often three or four of the big menhaden fishing boats stop by for a brief respite from the sea.

MOST boatmen tie up at Scotty's Warren (more formally the Cape May Boat Marina). There is a quick and easy friendliness, a pleasant inspection of gear and a spirited interchange of talk and chatter. These are people at home with one another, joined together by their love of the water and their familiarity with the Inland Waterway.

Cape May is a vital stop-over on the Waterway, one of the most important between New York and Florida. Close by is the Cape May Canal completed in 1942 to link the harbor and Delaware Bay. Four miles through that canal and 55 miles up the Delaware is the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, inland route to Chesapeake Bay.

Eventually anyone bitten by the boating bug to the extent that he contracts an incurable disease, travels up the Delaware to the C & D Canal and on to the south. This trip on the Navigator was an exposure instead of a real bite, however, an effort to experience in some way the symptoms of the boating fever. So, instead of the restless moving south, the Navigator reverses herself and takes the visitor home to Bay Head.

Capt. Huber sees it as merely another run. "If I had a dollar for every round trip I've made on this Waterway," he says, "I could buy a new Cadillac." The imaginative visitor sees it differently; he feels if he could spend his days cruising the Waterway he never would need a new Cadillac, or anything more than an old beach buggy.

MUCH later the visitor finds in the library a book by Talbot and Jessica Hamlin. He feels at least a distant kinship with them when they reminisce about some thoughts they had as they laid over at Scotty's Warren during a four-day blow:

"Sometimes we think all boat dwellers, ourselves included of course, are just a little mad—mad by the standards of the world. It is a charming madness, and that is one of the common bonds of those afloat; it is why they understand each other."

Perhaps, they conclude, "it is the land people who are mad and we on our boats are truly sane." It's possible, you know.

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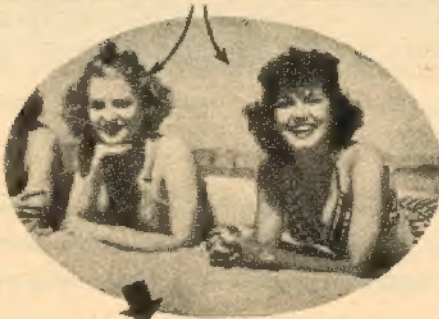
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